Hexham & Newcastle Diocesan Lay Training Fund (LTF)
Guidelines 2026–2027

The Purpose of the Lay Training Fund

The Lay Training Fund exists to ensure that finance is not a barrier to formation which enables the life and mission of the Church in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

The Fund seeks, first and foremost, to support formation that contributes directly to the diocesan vision and pastoral commitments. Priority will therefore be given to applications that clearly serve and strengthen the mission of the Church within parishes, partnerships, and diocesan structures.

The diocesan vision is:

A flourishing Diocese alive in the Holy Spirit, where people encounter Jesus Christ, where we live with justice and compassion, grow as one family of faith, and are formed and sent as missionary disciples to build God's Kingdom.

The mission of the Diocese is expressed through four commitments, which guide the priorities of the Lay Training Fund:

• Walking with Jesus and Enabling Encounters with Him
• Living Justly and Caring for Our Common Home
• Growing as One Diocesan Family
• Being Formed by Christ for Mission

Priority areas for 2026–2027 include:

- Catechist formation, including those seeking to study Pastoral Leadership
- Gift discernment that leads to furthering the Church's mission
- Accompaniment
- A diocesan Virtual Formation Learning Environment (VLE) to widen access and enable flexible participation in formation online and in person locally

• Lay leadership in its broadest sense

History and Significance of the Lay Training Fund

The Lay Training Fund was established in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle in 2006 under Bishop Kevin Dunn. Its purpose was to enable lay people to access formation, recognising the call of Vatican II for the laity to be affirmed in their vocation and call to holiness, alongside the growing need for lay formation and leadership in the life and mission of the Church.

Eligibility

The Lay Training Fund is open to adults (aged 18+) living in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle who are seeking formation that will deepen their faith and support the mission of the Church. Applications are welcome from those involved in ministry within the Church, whether in a voluntary or paid capacity, where the formation will deepen their capacity for service in the Church and contribute to the wider mission of the diocese.

Definition of Ministry

For the purposes of the Lay Training Fund, ministry is understood as service that is:
• Rooted in the life and mission of the Church, and
• Exercised within the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

This includes roles whose primary purpose is:
• Evangelisation
• Catechesis
• Liturgy
• Pastoral care
• Leadership within the Church

Ministry does not include roles where the primary purpose is professional or secular employment, including but not limited to education, healthcare, or other professions, even where these are exercised within a Catholic context.

The Nature of Formation
The Lay Training Fund supports formation that:
• Deepens faith, discipleship, and understanding of the Catholic tradition
• Enables individuals to participate more fully in the mission of the Church
• Builds capacity for ministry within parishes, partnerships, and diocesan life

Applications must clearly demonstrate that the primary purpose of the proposed formation is to support the mission of the Church. Any personal or professional benefit should be secondary to this purpose.

Exclusions

The Lay Training Fund will not normally support:

- Academic or professional qualifications where the primary purpose is career progression
- Courses or training that form part of, or are required by, an individual's employment
- Formation that would ordinarily be funded through an employer or statutory provision
- Courses that are primarily secular in content, even if they may have indirect benefit to the Church

Applications from Those in Paid Roles

Applications are welcomed from those employed by the Church where the formation:
- Enhances their ministry, and
- Serves the wider mission of the diocese

Applications will not be supported where the formation is:
- A requirement of employment, or
- Expected to be funded by an employer or other source

Frequency of Applications

Applicants may normally submit one application per financial year. Repeat annual applications may be considered where:

- There is clear evidence of progression in formation
- The formation involves multiple years of study

The panel reserves the right to decline repeated applications.

Assessment of Applications

All applications will be considered by the Lay Training Fund Panel. In assessing applications, the panel will give priority to those that:
- Clearly demonstrate alignment with the diocesan vision and mission commitments
- Show how the learning will be applied within a parish, partnership, or diocesan context
- Contribute to the building up of mission beyond the individual applicant

Where decisions need to be made between applications of comparable merit, the panel will also take into account:
- The anticipated impact of the formation

• The breadth of its potential reach and benefit within the diocese

Applicants will be expected to produce a report for the Lay Training Fund Panel at the end of their formation outlining the benefit of their learning.
It is the normal expectation that applicants will contribute approximately one third of the cost, with a parish or partnership contributing a further third, and the Lay Training Fund contributing the remaining third. Exceptions to this may be considered.

Application Requirements

Applications must include:

1. A completed application form
2. A clear statement outlining how the proposed formation supports the mission of the Church
3. Evidence of the intended context for application of learning (parish, partnership, or diocesan setting)
4. Details of any other funding sought or secured

Decision Making

The decision of the Lay Training Fund Panel is final. All awards are made at the discretion of the panel in light of the purposes and priorities of the Fund.